



Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants

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TESTIMONY by the
Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants (ConnAPA)
For the
The Public Health Committee Public Hearing
On
***H.B. No. 6374 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONNECTICUT MEDICAL EXAMINING BOARD.**

Wednesday, February 23, 2011 at 10:00

Representative Ritter, Representative Stillman and members of the Public Health committee, on behalf of the more than 1600 Physician Assistants in Connecticut represented by the Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants (ConnAPA), I thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony today against HB 6374.

I have been a physician assistant practicing in the State of Connecticut since 1998. Since 2009, I have been serving as chair of Government Affairs for the CT Academy of Physician Assistants (ConnAPA). ConnAPA is the professional society representing the physician assistants who practice in Connecticut. Physician Assistants (PAs) are licensed healthcare professionals who practice medicine with physician supervision in all medical and surgical specialties, and like physicians, are subject to the oversight of the Medical Examining Board.

The proposed changes to the Board composition specified in Section 1(c) of HB 6374 would eliminate designations of specific types of appointees by the Governor, and quite possibly, both the seat for a physician who supervises one or more PAs and the seat for one physician assistant. Please note that ConnAPA does not oppose the proposed method by which new members of the Board are appointed, but rather the lack of specifics regarding the individuals to be seated on the Board.

With this proposed bill, there is no mention of how many members must be physicians, physicians who supervise physician assistants or physician assistants. The current makeup of the board requires that one member of the Board must be a physician who supervises physician assistants, and one member of the Board must be a physician assistant. After January 1, 2012, these distinctions would be eliminated. ConnAPA opposes HB 6374 for those reasons.

Since the early 1970's, physician assistants have been providing healthcare in Connecticut. Presently, PAs serve patients in physician-directed teams from all age groups in primary care clinics, family medicine clinics, pediatric clinics, women's clinics, emergency rooms, and hospitals. Several medical organizations have policies supporting team practice. The American Medical Association maintains guidelines for physician-PA practice.¹ The American Academy of Family Physicians also recognizes the value of team practice.² Just recently, the Connecticut State Medical Society and Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants have jointly reiterated their respective professional commitments to physician-directed practice. Pursuant to Chapter 370 of the CT statutes, PAs see thousands of Connecticut residents daily and seek to provide accessible, high quality, cost-effective healthcare in this unique care team model.

However, even as PAs have become more well-known to patients and physicians alike, there are many physicians who are not familiar with the physician-PA team practice model much less the day-to-day responsibilities of the supervising physician or practicing PA. Even if physicians have worked indirectly with PAs in the current health care environment, they are often unfamiliar with the PA scope of practice and educational training.

On many occasions, past PA members of the Medical Examining Board have been asked to outline and clarify appropriate supervisory relationships between PAs and their supervising physicians. ConnAPA is concerned that if we remove the PA member from the Board, as this bill suggests, then both supervising physicians and physician assistants may be unfairly judged and, in turn, inappropriately disciplined. ConnAPA contends that a Medical Board comprised of members without this specific practice experience may create room for prejudice based on simple lack of knowledge when hearing complaints against individual clinicians working in the unique roles of the supervising physician or the physician assistant.

Specifically, ConnAPA urges the Public Health committee to amend HB 6374 to include the following language regarding membership of the Medical Examining Board appointed by the Governor:

1. "One physician who shall be a supervising physician for one or more physician assistants;"
2. "One physician assistant licensed pursuant to section 20-12b and practicing in this state;"

ConnAPA respectfully appeals to the Public Health committee membership to reinstate this language to maintain fair and appropriate representation on the Board that includes members who are distinctly suited to hear and judge complaints against practitioners practicing in the unique model of the physician-directed MD-PA team.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Public Health Committee.

Respectfully submitted,



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Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants

¹American Medical Association (2009). Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners. Policy H-160-947, from www.ama-assn.org/ad-com/polfind/Hlth-Ethics.pdf, page 156.

²American Academy of Family Physicians. (2009) AAFP Reference Manual – Selected Policies on Health Issues. Kansas City, MO.
From www.aafp.org/online/en/home/policy/policies/i/integratedpracticearrangements.html